

APPENDIX A – COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN ISSUES RAISED IN THE CONSULTATION

Table 2: Comments in relation to the proposal to close the nursery class at South Ascot Village Primary School

Ref	Issue	No. raising	Further description of the comments made	Response
1.	AGAINST – families will have to use private provision, who require financial top-ups.	2	The point being made here is that attendance at South Ascot Village Primary School's nursery is free, up to the 15 or 30 hours per week funded by the government. Although private nurseries also offer 15 or 30 hours a week, in line with government regulations, they may charge for aspects of that provision, such as meals, nappies, lunchtime cover and so on.	The borough's early years team note that the early years funding from the government does not fully cover the costs of providing early years education. Schools manage this by subsidising nursery class provision from the main school budget, and by fund raising. Private providers do, as the respondents note, often charge extra fees for aspects of the provision, such as lunches, nappies and so on. These charges should be voluntary, but it seems likely that parents/carers using a private provider may end up paying more than they currently do. Unfortunately, South Ascot Village Primary School are not able to continue using their main school budget to subsidise the nursery class, hence the proposal for closure.
2.	AGAINST – will closure impact on demand for Reception places?	1	There was concern that reducing the number of nursery children would have a knock-on effect for the school's Reception intake, which could, in turn, affect the viability of the main school.	Demand for primary school places in Ascot as a whole is now quite low, following falling birth rates (a national phenomenon), and a rapid drop in net inward migration during the pandemic. It is not yet clear whether migration into the borough will return to previous levels. The situation is being monitored, but it is unlikely that demand for the primary school will be much affected by the nursery closure.
3.	AGAINST – have other options been considered, e.g. provision of wraparound care?	1	It was felt that a wider offer by the nursery provision, i.e. wraparound care, would improve the popularity of the nursery provision.	It is very difficult for schools, within the existing revenue funding arrangements, to provide wraparound care, particularly for 50 or 51 weeks of the year. This is one of the reasons why nursery classes across the borough have been declining in popularity – no school has yet been able to provide the same level of wraparound care as private providers. Additionally, South Ascot Village Primary School has previously run an after school club, up to 6pm, open to all age groups. This used to average only 10 children, and so was stopped as it was not financially viable. It is, therefore, difficult to imagine that the demand for this provision at South Ascot Village Primary School currently exists.
4.	AGAINST – South Ascot Village Primary Nursery is good quality	1	The nursery provision should remain open because it is of good quality.	South Ascot Village Primary School agree that the nursery provision is of good quality, but also note that, to be fully effective and allow children to really learn and hone social skills, they need other children around them. This is not necessarily being provided in a nursery class of just seven children.
5.	AGAINST – South Ascot Village Primary hasn't promoted its nursery in the local community	1	The numbers at the nursery class would be higher if the school promoted it more in the local community.	For the reasons set out above, the type of early years provision that the nursery class can offer is limited and is no longer what most parents seem to want (full wraparound care, available for most of the year, including in holiday periods). Without that capability, the promotion or otherwise of the class is not likely to have any significant impact on demand.